

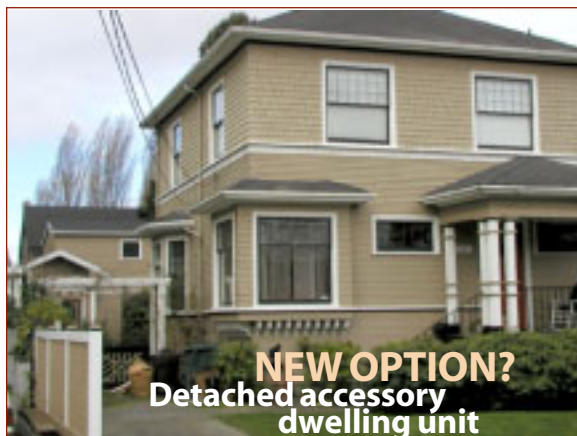
Help us improve Seattle's Housing Choices

Overview

The composition of American households has changed dramatically in key ways since the 1950s, pointing to a growing need for smaller, more affordable housing options. Allowing new infill housing in Seattle's single family zones could help reduce sprawl and auto dependency while maintaining existing residential character.

As infill housing would have other impacts—including issues like traffic, parking, and privacy—City planners are involving citizens, architects and others to find ways to best address them. Working with these groups Seattle's Department of Design, Construction and Land Use (DCLU) will propose a balanced recommendation that accommodates our changing needs while limiting new impacts to the extent possible.

This brochure provides an overview of Seattle's changing demographics and housing needs, an exploration of new options, and an opportunity to get involved.



NEW OPTION?
Detached accessory
dwelling unit



NEW OPTION?
Cottage housing

City planners are looking for your feedback to address Seattle's growth challenges and the need for more housing options

Studies released over the past few years have shown that the Puget Sound region, with Seattle as the state's largest city, must accommodate additional housing to keep up with its growing population. In fact, a recent King County study showed that Seattle must add 51,510 new households by 2022 to keep pace with projected growth.

But Seattle doesn't just need more housing; it also needs more choices in housing types. The past two censuses have made it clear that the fastest growing segments of our population are no longer traditional families. Most households these days are comprised of single people, senior citizens, single-parent families, and couples. These groups now represent over half of our population—both nationally and locally—and this segment will continue to grow.

Make your mark on Seattle's future!
Send us your thoughts today (see insert)

Household Changes

"The oldest baby boomers will reach age 65 in 2011. Over a third of the population in the 65 & over age bracket tends to live alone."

Diana Cornelius
City of Seattle Demographer
Source: 2000 U.S. Census



The Changing Face of Households

Household composition has changed dramatically in a number of key ways between the 1950s and the present, both nationally and in Seattle. These trends are expected to continue in the coming years, and point to a growing need for smaller, more affordable housing options.

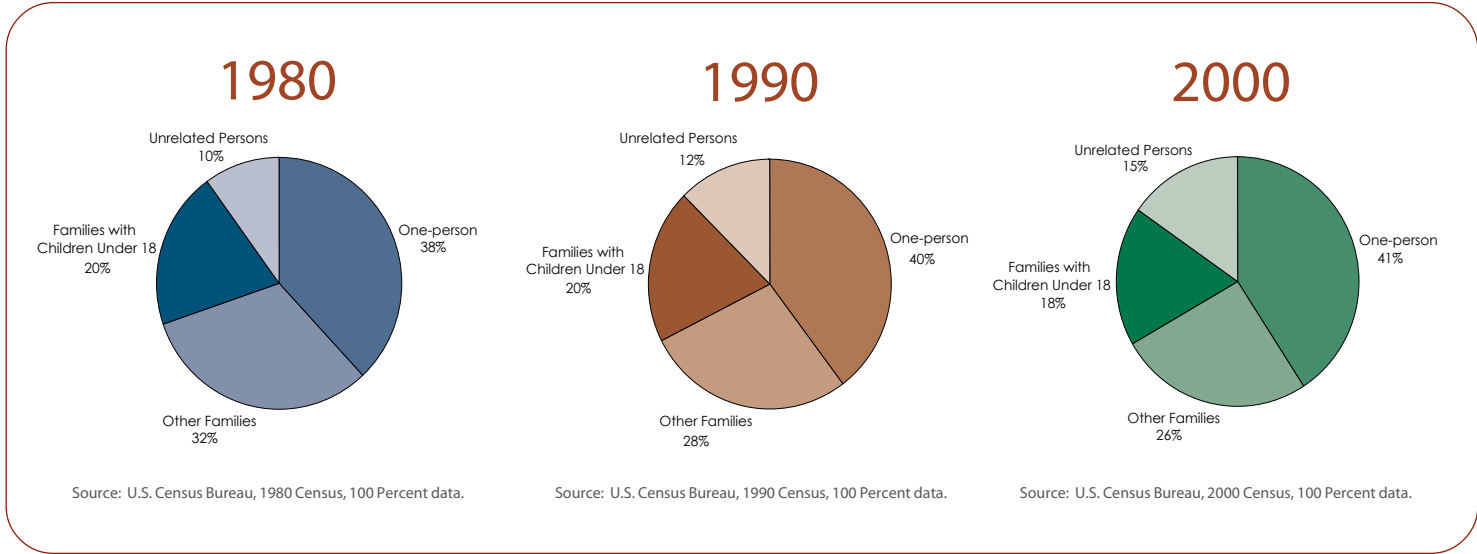
- Since the 1950s the average house size has doubled while the number of people per household has shrunk.
- The number of Americans 65 years or older is expected to climb from 31.8 million in 1991 to over 66 million in 2030.
- While the housing industry continues to build homes for young married couples with children, the reality is that less than 35 percent of the new households formed between 1995 and 2000 consisted of married couples with children.
- Between 1995 and 2000 more than 40 percent of new households formed were singles or unrelated individuals living together. Another 22 percent were single parents with children.

Source: "Building Livable Communities: A Policymaker's Guide to Infill Development" (2nd Edition). The Local Government Commission

Household Changes

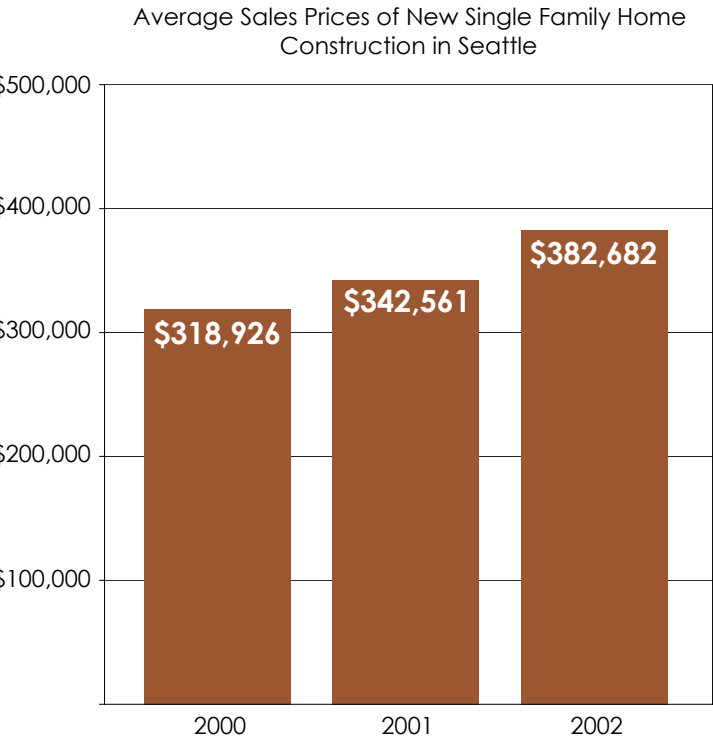
Changes in Household Composition: 1980-2000

The pie charts below show the change in household composition in Seattle over the past 20+ years. Note that the number of families with children has decreased, while other categories have increased.



Increase in Housing Prices: 2000-2002

The chart below shows that during the last three years (including two years of economic downturn), the average sales price of new single family homes within Seattle has increased 17 percent.



Source: NWMLS.

“Our changing population characteristics and living choices point to a growing need for smaller, more affordable housing options.”

Diane Sugimura
Director, DCLU

Current Housing Options

Currently Seattle has several zones that allow single family and low-to-moderate density multifamily residences



Older single family homes



New single family home



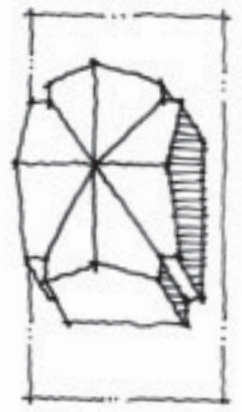
Apartments and condos



Townhouses

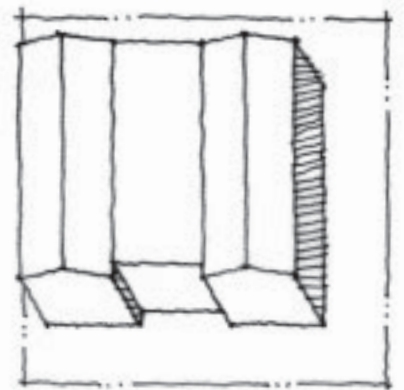
Single Family Zones

Detached house on a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet.



Lowrise Zones

Typical housing types range from duplexes, to townhouses, to 2- to 4-story apartment buildings



The Demonstration Program for Innovative Housing Design

In 1998, the City established a Demonstration Program for Innovative Housing Design to help further diversify Seattle's housing stock and provide an alternative to living in a conventional house, condominium, or apartment. The Demonstration Program tested innovative residential design solutions using alternative development standards and processes.

The program allowed flexibility for development not currently allowed under existing regulations, while continuing to be consistent with the City's land use, housing, and neighborhood goals. Because of their popularity, the program primarily demonstrated older types of smaller-scale housing that are present in many Seattle neighborhoods—cottage housing, detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs), or smaller single family houses on small lots. A competitive selection process was used, and all selected projects were required to go through the City's Design Review Program.

Current Housing Options



Seattle Single Family Zones

The gray areas on the map at left show that the majority of Seattle's land is zoned for single family housing.

Zoning Type	% Net Acreage
Single Family Residential Areas	56.7%
Multifamily Residential Areas	10.6%
Commercial/Mixed Use Areas	8.4%
Industrial Areas	11.6%
Downtown Areas	1.5%
Major Institutions	2.1%
City-Owned/Public Open Space	9.1%

*Note: Waterways and rights-of-way are not included.
Source: City of Seattle GIS & King County Assessor*

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, 1994-2014: Goals, Policies & Recommendations

- HG1 - Accommodate a range of 50,000 to 60,000 additional households over the next 20 years covered by this plan.
- HG2 - Maintain housing affordability over the life of this plan.
- HG4 - Achieve a mix of housing types attractive and affordable to a diversity of ages, incomes, household types, household sizes, and cultural backgrounds.
- HG6 - Encourage and support accessible design and housing strategies that provide seniors the opportunity to remain in their own neighborhood as their housing needs change.
- HG7 - Accommodate a variety of housing types that are attractive and affordable to potential home buyers.
- HG9 - Consider new ground-related housing such as townhouses and cottage housing as part of the City's strategy for creating home ownership opportunities.
- H20 - Promote and foster, where appropriate, innovative and non-traditional housing types such as cohousing, live/work housing and accessory dwelling units, as alternative means of accommodating residential growth and providing affordable housing options.

New housing options—like cottages and detached accessory dwelling units—can help bridge the gap in Seattle's housing market between what is currently allowed in single family and lowrise zones.

See pages 6-10

NEW Housing Options

Detached ADUs

What is a detached ADU?

A detached accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a small living space located on the same lot as a single family house, but physically separate. Detached ADUs can create attractive and affordable

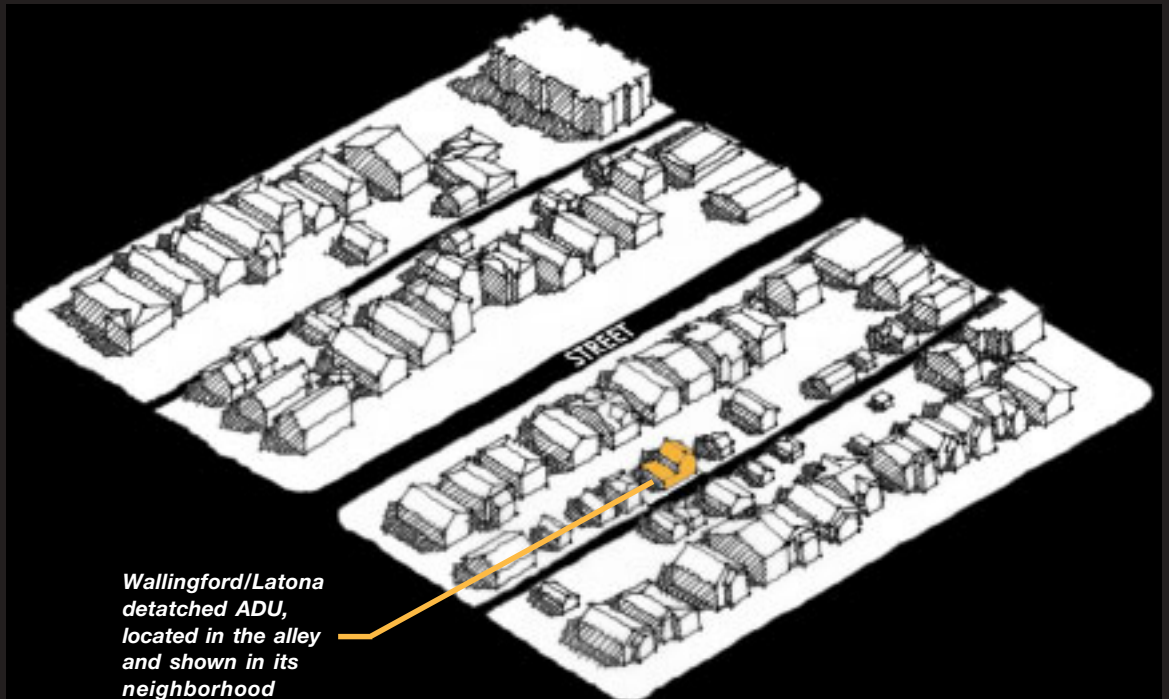
rental opportunities in Seattle without changing the character or quality of life in existing single family areas. They can also provide greater flexibility for the homeowner than what is currently allowed, while offering a new housing type in Seattle that is desirable, quiet, and more affordable. It is often rented, and sometimes occupied by a family member.



Interior of Wallingford detached accessory dwelling unit (ADU).

What does our current zoning code say about regular ADUs?

Currently, accessory dwelling units are allowed outright in all single family zones, but must be added to or within an existing structure. To maintain the legal use of an ADU, the property owner must reside in either the primary residence, or in the ADU. One off-street parking space for the ADU is required under most circumstances, and all ADUs are limited to 1,000 square feet in size.



Wallingford/Latona detached ADU, located in the alley and shown in its neighborhood context.

Green Lake/Wallingford Example



*Above: View of main home from street.
Right: View of detached ADU from rear alley.*



Project Profile

- Detached ADU above garage on an alley.
- Other accessory structures (garages) line the alley here, including one with a small working space above it and one with a legally grandfathered ADU above it.

Tenant Profile

- Currently not being used as an ADU

Cost of Construction

- \$152,000

Lessons Learned

- Project reflects some of the architectural features of the main home, including the pitch of dormers, soffit braces, and trim emphasizing building features such as corners and windows.
- It is important for detached ADUs to reflect the predominate surrounding architectural style.
- To the extent feasible, new landscaping needs to compliment the existing neighborhood, soften the visual impact, and preserve the privacy of residents and neighbors.

Neighborhood Response

- Survey results show that neighborhood sentiment about the project is, for the most part, very positive.

North Capitol Hill Example



*Above: View of main home with detached ADU behind.
Right: View of detached ADU from driveway.*



Project Profile

- One-and-a-half story detached ADU sits behind a single family home.

Tenant Profile

- Single, active, professional woman in her 50's.
- Very happy with unit and has lived in it since its completion.

Rent

- \$1,000/month

Cost of construction

- \$41,000 plus construction time (owner-built)
- \$95,000 estimated total construction value

Lessons learned

- The detached ADU project succeeds in part by matching the existing structure in scale relationship, materials, and architectural features.
- The area around the ADU is heavily vegetated, preserving privacy for the unit, the primary structure, and neighbors.

Neighborhood response

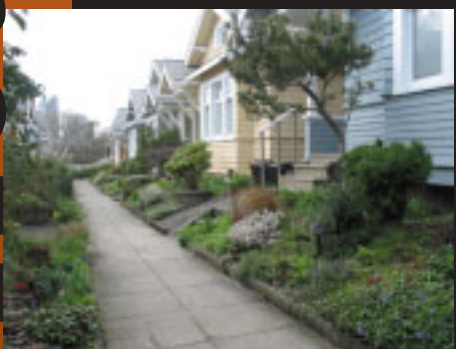
- Less initial support, but reducing the size made it acceptable to neighbors.
- Neighborhood surveys indicate this is one of the most accepted demonstration projects.

Quotes from neighbors of the Green Lake / Wallingford detached accessory dwelling unit

*"Overall I found it to be non-intrusive (it's on an alley) and fine. I like the added diversity to this predominantly single family neighborhood."
"Much nicer than condos on the corner."
"As long as parking is provided."*

NEW Housing Options

Cottage Housing



Above: Cottages are not really a new idea in Seattle. Among the existing examples pictured, the Pine Street cottages (middle pic) were originally constructed in the midst of a single family neighborhood in 1916.

Below: Greenwood Cottages, a new cottage development in Shoreline, WA. Photo courtesy of The Cottage Company.



What is Cottage Housing?

Cottage housing developments (CHDs) are modest-sized, detached units grouped around a common open space. Each cottage is typically smaller than 1,000 sq. ft.

Cottages are often separated from one another by a side yard to provide some private space and single family-type scale and character, while fostering a sense of community through the shared open space. As explained by one cottage homeowner, "I think they are desirable for people who want a smaller place to take care of, a smaller yard, room for a garden, and a detached house close to their neighbors."

Cottage housing developments can architecturally blend into existing single family neighborhoods through careful attention to the design of the units, open spaces and landscaping. Well proportioned cottage houses, with porches, small gardens, varied roof lines and dormers have helped successful CHDs, such as Greenwood Cottages in Shoreline, WA, fit comfortably into surrounding neighborhoods of older, detached homes.

In meeting the needs of a significant and growing share of the housing market, built examples of cottage housing developments in the Puget Sound Region provide many useful lessons as the City of Seattle considers changing its Land Use Code to allow such innovative development.

What does our current zoning code say about Cottage Housing?

Tandem and cottage developments are allowed in the Residential Small Lot (RSL) zone. RSL designations may only be designated in areas within urban villages through adoption of a Neighborhood Plan, and require a rezone. Four to twelve detached single family houses are allowed on one lot, with a minimum lot area of 6,400 square feet and a density limit of one unit per 1,600 SF of lot area.

To date, there has been only one rezone to RSL in the city. The lengthy rezone application and review process contributes to this low number. Cluster housing built to RSL standards are also allowed in Lowrise zones, which are the City's low to medium density multifamily zones.

Case Study: Ravenna Cottages



Three views of Ravenna Cottages, an example of cottage housing built under the Demonstration Program for Innovative Housing Design



Project Profile

- 6 cottages with 3 carriage units above garages on an alley.
- The project is between Green Lake and I-5, less than a block from a multifamily and commercial area.



structure under the two northeast cottages.

Lessons Learned

- Overall, the Ravenna Cottages project is a success, especially given how the neighborhood sentiment has evolved since the idea's inception.
- Some neighbors believe that the development is too dense with the addition of carriage units.
- The project's Craftsman-style design and excellent landscaping help it fit into the neighborhood visually.
- During the design review process, several neighbors expressed concern regarding the use of garages for storage rather than parking, which put more parked cars on an already crowded street. In response, the Design Review Board recommended including storage areas for each unit in the basement

Neighborhood Response

- Overall neighbors think the project has had a good or minimal impact.
- Neighbors generally rate the impact of Ravenna Cottages on traffic and parking negatively. However, survey comments indicated some differences of opinion on this topic.
- This project rated very high for quality of construction and design.

Quotes from neighbors of Ravenna Cottages

"I heard concerns, at first and before construction, about parking. I live two doors from the development and as yet, have found no concerns with parking."

"Despite the nine garages built for each development, they are not being used by most of their owners for parking. Other than the serious parking/traffic problem...it is well designed & very pleasing visually."

"This type of housing is excellent."

"Visually very dense looking."



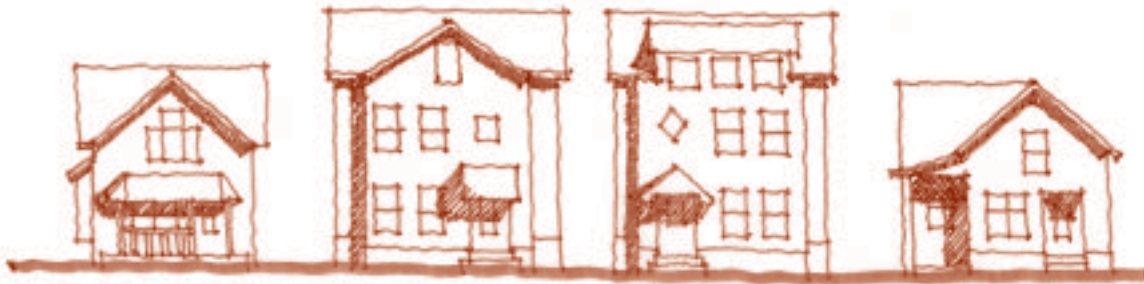
Sketch showing Ravenna Cottages within the neighborhood context.

Cottage Housing (cont.)

Comparison of code-complying single family houses with a cottage housing development

Example of two new houses on 5,000 square foot lots in a typical single family neighborhood that meet Single Family zone development standards, including maximum height (35'), lot coverage, and setbacks. Due to cost of land, many new Single Family houses are now being built to near-maximum allowed by zoning.

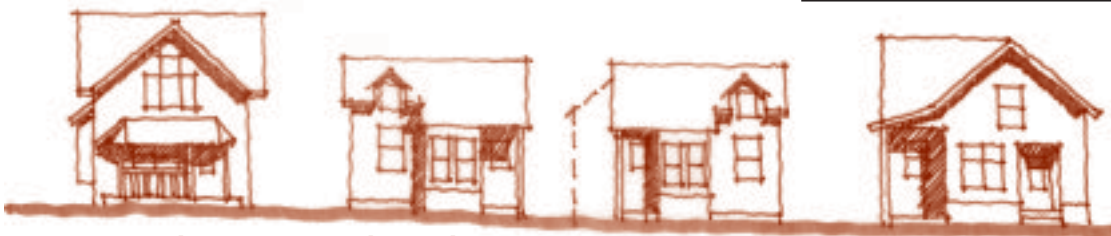
*Right: Isometric view
Below: View from street level*



code-complying single family houses

Example of a cottage housing development prototype on the same amount of area (10,000 sq. ft), with six small cottage units (each with approx. 950 sq ft. of total floor area) grouped around a common open space. Two garages with a total of six parking spaces are located on the alley.

*Right: Isometric view
Below: View from street level*



cottage housing development

Goals

City Planners are working to:

- Provide information that helps the public understand the broader growth challenges Seattle and the region are experiencing.
- Research and provide information about changing trends in household composition over the past two decades and implications for housing needs.
- Educate City officials and the public about housing options that can help address growth issues.
- Engage the public in developing and tailoring these options to our community's specific situation.

Public Process

- City Planners have conducted interviews and surveys to learn key lessons from the demonstration projects (cottage housing and detached ADUs).
- City staff have discussed the findings from demonstration projects with City officials and the Planning Commission.
- Planning Commission sponsored three focus groups to discuss and get input on the housing options being considered (focus groups aimed at the general public, people familiar with the housing options being considered, and housing experts).
- DCLU and the Planning Commission will sponsor a public open house and forum to inform the broader public about the proposed housing options and get input on key issues identified through the demonstration projects and focus groups.
- The City will broadly distribute information on the housing options, including brochure mailings, print and web news articles and presentation materials for City and neighborhood events.
- Planning Commission will issue a report to DCLU and Council with observations and recommendations regarding ways to address public concerns and ideas on the housing options proposals.
- The Planning Commission's report will be available this spring, following the public forum. DCLU will then consider the report's recommendations and public input as staff further refines the cottage housing and detached ADU proposals for the Mayor and City Council in the summer/fall. There will be additional opportunities to comment throughout this process.

For More Information

Focus groups held in late February will be followed by a public forum on March 26, 2003. This forum will provide information and an opportunity for the community to contribute to the housing options proposals.

If you would like additional information on these proposals, the public process or the forum, please contact one of the following DCLU staff members:

Detached ADUs

Jory Phillips
Senior Planner
(206) 386-9761
jory.phillips@seattle.gov

Cottage Housing

Mike Kimelberg
Senior Planner
(206) 684-4625
mike.kimelberg@seattle.gov

Public Process

Marty Curry
Exec Director, Seattle
Planning Commission
(206) 684-0431
marty.curry@seattle.gov

Help us Improve Seattle's Housing Choices

INTRODUCTION, cont. from page 1

Meanwhile, in terms of household composition and settlement patterns, Seattle's residential zoning reflects the 1940-1950s when traditional families and detached homes were the norm. Approximately 60 percent of Seattle's residentially zoned land is currently designated as Single Family. While it is important for the city to maintain this supply of housing for families with children, it is also important to recognize the changing demand for housing.

Precipitated in part by current population trends, interest in smaller-scale housing has been growing nationwide. This phenomenon was most popularly articulated by architect and author Sarah Susanka in her 1998 book, *The Not So Big House* and its sequel, *Creating the Not So Big House*. These books make the point that smaller-scale homes with pleasing architectural features are livable, enjoyable, and socially responsible. Interest in such small housing has increased in the Pacific Northwest with the development of several cottage housing developments, which have proven to be highly livable while accommodating the changing lifestyles associated with shifts in household composition.

But the issue at hand is much larger than hanging soffits, craftsmen finishes, and front porches. Allowing new infill housing opportunities—such as cottage housing developments and detached accessory dwelling units—in single family zones can help reduce sprawl, reduce auto dependency, and, through good

design and sensitivity to surrounding areas, maintain existing residential character.

These housing choices help solve much larger puzzles as well. Detached ADUs and cottages can house more people closer to the Seattle's downtown, its urban centers, and their associated services and places of employment. This helps to stem the tide of continuing suburban expansion and reduce miles driven, congestion, fossil fuel consumed, and air pollution generated.

The City of Seattle is committed to guiding the city's development in the context of regional growth management. Seattle's Comprehensive Plan promotes a mix of housing types that support walking and the use of public transportation.¹ This type of compact development, commonly referred to today as "smart growth," is the cornerstone in addressing the many growth-related challenges facing us today. New housing options, such as the cottage housing developments and detached accessory dwelling units discussed in this document, can help achieve these goals, while preserving the character of our neighborhoods.

¹ Researchers comparing 68 cities on four continents have identified population density thresholds that increase residents' transportation options. In neighborhoods with fewer than 12 people per acre, a car is needed for virtually every trip. Above this threshold, bus ridership increases, private vehicle ownership drops, and car trips become shorter.

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Make your mark on Seattle's future!
Send us your thoughts today (see insert)

